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# Implications of School Board Membership: A Handbook for School Board Members

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IMPLICATIONS OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERSHIP

A HANDBOOK  
FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

BY  
W.B.OWEN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

WESTERN KENTUCKY STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

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## PREFACE

"Give me for a few years the direction of education and I agree to transform the world."

Erasmus.

In the preparation of this study the writer has attempted to keep in mind always the importance of the board of education in its relationships with the schools and with all the other civic interests of the community. The major premise is that the schools are made by the community, but the responsibility of leading the people in the attainment of their educational ideals rests with the directing body. When members of the board of education are disinclined to foster and promote the most progressive attitudes of the people toward the educational program, the schools suffer and fail to become a true expression of community desires. If anything is said in this simple discussion, that will cause boards of education to feel more keenly their responsibilities as the controlling element back of the school system, it will have served its purpose.

The writer is under special obligation to Dr. Bert R. Smith, without whose encouragement and timely suggestions, this work could hardly have been completed. Expression of thanks and appreciation is extended to Dr. Lee Frances Jones for suggesting the subject, to Dr. A.M. Stickles for reading and checking the manuscript, and to other members of the graduate faculty from whom were received many of the ideas included.

W.B.O.

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The problem.- A great number of pertinent and valuable contributions on the work of boards of education have been made emphasizing more particularly those aspects of establishment and organization, that are subject, more or less, to legislative action, and are consequently beyond control of the immediate board or its members. This study is concerned primarily with those phases of school board activity and relations that may be improved by the collective or individual efforts of the members constituting any board of education. They include the following:

1. Relations with the community.
2. Attitudes toward school administration and control.
3. Cooperation with the state department of education.
4. Conduct of official business.
5. Personal training for school board membership.

Scope of the study.- The treatment of matters relating to school boards and school board members, which is attempted in this brief study, is limited by its purposes as mentioned above. No attempt is made toward a pretentious effort involving a great amount of correspondence with or numerous statements from leading school board members and authorities on the subject. The discussion, except for Chapter II, "History and Development of Boards of Education", and the statement of preferable conditions, is confined to the more intimate phases of school board activity and responsibility.

Source of data.- The discussion is based on data obtained

from original sources in American History, bulletins from the United States Bureau of Education, files of the American School Board Journal and the Nation's Schools, Research Bulletins of the N.E.A., state school laws, perusal of similar studies, and from viewpoints expressed in administration classes at the Western Kentucky State Teachers College and at Teachers College of Columbia University. In addition to material obtained from these sources the writer has incorporated ideas derived from his own experience and observation.

Method of treatment.- For the most part, the treatment employed in this study is purely expository and philosophical in character. The comparisons and conclusions are drawn with the aid of very little supporting data of a statistical nature. Certain portions of the discussion may seem dogmatic and subject to material differences of opinion, but considerable care has been taken to avoid an attitude of absolute finality, in matters that may be controversial to a marked degree.

Review of similar studies.- The following have been selected for brief review from a number of excellent works because of the treatment included being more closely related to the problem involved in this study. The arrangement is alphabetical and has no bearing whatever on the relative importance of the discussions reviewed.

Almack, John C., "The School Board Member"

Non-delegated duties of the board.- In discussing the proper relationships between the board of education and its chief executive officer Almack lists the following duties which are always to be performed by the board:

"Selecting the superintendent of schools and other leading administrative officers, approving the budget, adopting rules and regulations, fixing the qualifications of teachers and other employees, planning the system of school organization, deciding upon the procedure of its meetings, making contracts for buildings and grounds, passing finally upon the employment of teachers, and expanding and otherwise modifying the educational program." 1

Delegated duties of the board.- He suggests the following as duties to be delegated to administrative officers:

"Selecting teachers and other employees; that is making nominations, supervising and directing all employees in service, purchasing supplies and equipment, recording, accounting, and reporting, preparing the budget, drawing rules and regulations, conducting investigations, and gathering data." 2

Procedure in meetings.- The following table suggests an order of business and makes an allotment of time for the various items usually included in a board meeting.

TABLE I  
ORDER OF BUSINESS

	Minutes
Call to order and roll call	2- 3
Reading minutes of the previous meeting	5-10
Communications from the public	10-20
Unfinished business	15-20
Reports of the school officers *	10-15
New business	32-50
Adjournment	1- 2
Total	75-120

1 Almack, John C., The School Board Member (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1927), pp. 53-54.

2 loc. cit.

A Ibid., p. 92.

\* A similar table in Research Bulletin of the N.E.A., Vol. XI, No. 1, p. 18 includes 15-30 minutes for the superintendent's report and 10-15 minutes for reports of special committees.

Code of ethics.- On pages 235-238 Almack presents a code of ethics consisting of principles that conform rather closely to the items included in the following table.

TABLE II

## A SCALE FOR RATING THE EFFICIENCY OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

	5	4	3	2	1
	Superi- or	Good	Aver- age	Fair	Inferi- or
1. Belief in the public schools	:	:	:	:	:
2. Willingness to learn	:	:	:	:	:
3. Interest in the community	:	:	:	:	:
4. Ability to cooperate	:	:	:	:	:
5. Ability to withstand criticism	:	:	:	:	:
6. Ability to plan for the future	:	:	:	:	:
7. Loyalty to associates	:	:	:	:	:
8. Sense of justice	:	:	:	:	:
9. Knowledge of education	:	:	:	:	:
10. Financial ability	:	:	:	:	:
11. Honesty and sincerity	:	:	:	:	:
12. Willingness to progress	:	:	:	:	:
13. Sense of responsibility	:	:	:	:	:
14. Intelligence	:	:	:	:	:
15. Persistence	:	:	:	:	:
16. Ability to get things done	:	:	:	:	:
17. Open-mindedness	:	:	:	:	:
18. Punctuality	:	:	:	:	:
19. Courtesy	:	:	:	:	:
20. Good nature	:	:	:	:	:
Totals	:	:	:	:	:
Final Score **	:	:	:	:	:

B

Ibid., p. 24

\*\*

A superior rating for all items listed produces a score of 100, a rating of good produces a score of 80 etc.; when the ratings are distributed among the different columns, the summation of the totals is the final score.

Summary.- The concluding paragraphs of Almack's discussion contain these statements relative to the importance of the position enjoyed by school board members:

"The school director is an important force in shaping the course of education. As such, he is also a powerful instrument in guiding the destiny of the state, the nation, and society.. The compensation...is not in money, nor even in honor, but in the consciousness of having helped in training young men and women for the part they are to play in American state and national life." 3

Olsen, "The Work of Boards of Education"

Source of data.- The minutes of school board meetings in thirteen cities ranging from 5000 to nearly a million in population were used by Olsen in the preparation of his study.

The problem.-<sup>4</sup>The problem as stated by the writer is three-fold:

1. To discover the functions a board of education should itself perform.
2. To determine the functions it should delegate to its employed professional chief executive and his subordinates.
3. To ascertain how a board of education should do its work." 4

The work of the school board and superintendent.- Chapter II is an extended and comprehensive listing in parallel arrangement of the many types of decisions to be made by the board of education and the corresponding duties to be performed by the superintendent of schools. Practically every phase of public school administration and control is included in the lists, and the wording is such that the obligations of both the board and the superintendent are made reasonably definite.

3

Ibid., pp. 272-273

4

Olsen, H.C., The Work of Boards of Education, Contributions to Education, No. 213 (New York, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1926).



TABLE III

## ADMINISTRATION AND CONTROL OF LIBRARY FACILITIES

C

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**Questions of educational policy.**

1. What library facilities shall be provided in the different schools?
  2. Shall rooms be furnished in public school buildings for branch public libraries or for community libraries?
  3. What kind of books, magazines... may not be placed in the library?
  4. What shall be the annual appropriation for school libraries?
- 

**Administrative duties.**

1. Ascertain library facilities needed in each school.
  2. Assign rooms for library purposes.
  3. Select and purchase magazines, books,... in accordance with the policies of the school board.
  4. Determine appropriation needed for library purposes during the year.
- 

How a board of education should do its work.- Olsen agrees with other authorities on school administration in regard to standing committees among the membership of boards of education.

"Control of the school rests in the board of education acting as a unit. Because of the tendency of committees to determine policies and to control the schools by virtue of the fact that their reports are seldom carefully reviewed by the board, standing committee organization of schools is undesirable. All administrative details should be delegated to the superintendent of schools, and policies and reports should invariably be considered by the board as a whole." 5

The School Board Member, Research Bulletin of the N.E.A.

Working with others.-Topics included in this discussion are: relation of a board member to the board itself, relation of one

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C

Adapted from Olsen, "The Work of Board of Education", p. 18.

5

Ibid., pp. 165-166.

board member to another, the board and the employees of the board, and ethics for school board members. Reference is made to Almack's code (mentioned in connection with his study above.)

The school board in action.-This portion of the bulletin is devoted to school board meetings, educational policies, personnel problems, and business relations. Excellent illustrations are given showing two typical board meetings, one the progressive and business-like type - the other an extreme opposite.

Rules and regulations.-The compilers of the Research Bulletin warn against rules and regulations that seek to catalogue administrative details and advise those that embody the following:

- "1. They are guiding principles rather than mere collections of detailed instructions.
2. They are stated so clearly that they are not likely to be misinterpreted.
3. They are consistent with school law.
4. They are carefully organized, indexed, and printed in usable form." 6

Theisen, The City Superintendent and the Board of Education

Source of data.- Theisen used information gathered from 100 cities ranging in population from 1200 to 4,767,000.

Recommendations and conclusions.- Since a further reference is made to Theisen's work, only his concluding remarks are given here.

"A board of education should endeavor to discover its own proper duties and those that should be delegated to professional executive officers. Its function is first of all (a) to choose a professionally trained executive, centralize authority and responsibility for results in him and expect him to initiate all policies; and then (b) to debate such proposed policies with him in the light of definite objective evidence and to provide the legislation necessary

to secure efficient results. A board of education need wait for no precedent to adopt a form of administrative organization in which the professional superintendent is made the administrative leader and chief executive of the system, and in which the board itself serves in an advisory capacity and acts only through its chief executive. Such precedent is amply provided by successful business organizations." 7

#### General Comment

Many splendid discussions and enlightening view-points are omitted from these brief and rather superficial reviews. Also a number of other very excellent studies have not been summarized in this chapter, any one of which contains a wealth of material relevant to the subjects under discussion in this study.

A recent editorial in the American School Board Journal expresses in succinct fashion the seemingly ideal relationship between a board of education and its superintendent of schools.

"The board of education, as a rule reflects the taxpayer's attitude while the superintendent, on the other hand, is concerned with the educational program which he believes to be of prime importance.... The board of education is the legislative, judicial, and policy-making body, which delegates authority to the superintendent to administer the school system. They jointly control, manage, and administer the school system." 8

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7

W.W.Theisen, The City Superintendent and the Board of Education, Contributions to Education, No. 84 (New York, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1917), pp. 125-126.

8

Editorial, The American School Board Journal(July,1936), p. 44.

## CHAPTER II

## THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION

When the widely differing elements of English society, varying from the peerage to the populace, were transplanted to the wilds of America, it became extremely difficult for them to resume their native customs in matters of religion, morality, and education. The immediate urge to provide the physical requirements of life, and the hostility of their surroundings imposed a restraint upon them, which delayed their development along cultural lines. But from the first our colonial ancestors had the educational and moral welfare of their children at heart. There are many expressions of desires for the establishment of schools recorded among the papers of the early governmental leaders.

## Early Provisions For School Direction

Colonial attitudes toward education.-One of the early criticisms of life in the Plymouth Colony, 1623, was that "the children were not taught to reade." In answer to the charge Governor William Bradford replied,

"Diuerse take pains with their owne as they can, Indeeed we haue no commone schoole for want of a fit person, or hithertoo means to maintaine one, though we desire now to begine." 1

Unfortunately, the attitude toward a "commone schoole" in Virginia was not so favorable to the development of public

1

A.B.Hart, American History Told by Contemporaries (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1897), Vol.1, p. 354.

education. As late as 1671 in his report to the Commissioners of Plantations Governor Berkeley made the following statement,

"But I thank God, there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, and libels against the best government. God keep us from both." 2

Free schools were not delayed a hundred years in Virginia, but Governor Berkeley's prayer was prophetic in that the South has been slower in the development of adequate public schools than other parts of the nation. The establishment and direction of schools in the South, however, were more difficult from the outset than was the case in New England where settlement areas were much more densely populated. The growth of county government in the Southern Colonies was largely responsible for the creation of boards for school control representing larger districts as contrasted with the town boards of New England.

Local aspects of school control.-From the very conception of public education in the American Colonies to the present, the problem of effective school direction has been a matter of vital interest to the people. Since a very great portion of the financial support for public education has come from the smaller governmental units, the question of control has assumed quite generally a local aspect, although the difficulties involved have always been very similar throughout the country. Due to the local character of school control widely divergent opinions and practices have developed concerning the membership and responsibility

of the various bodies directing educational affairs.

Democratic control of the first schools in America.- During the early years of the colonial period, when society involved none of its twentieth century complexities, education like other matters of common interest, was controlled for the most part in a purely democratic fashion. When matters regarding the "instruction of the youth" were to be considered, the people of the entire town or community assembled publicly to effect some sort of arrangement favorable to all, or to at least a majority of those taking part in the proceedings. One meeting might suffice to provide for the physical requirements of a school, determine a desirable course of study, establish rules for conducting the new institution, and to select a schoolmaster on whose shoulders the further responsibility for routing ignorance was squarely placed. But such conditions could not continue with the rapidly growing population attended by a corresponding increase in individual activities and community interests. It became imperative that other means of school control be devised.

#### The Establishment of the Modern School Board

When it became evident that it was impossible for all the people of a community to participate actively in school affairs, they naturally resorted to the second step in democratic development, the delegation of authority to duly elected representatives. At various times those chosen have been known as inspectors, wardens, overseers, and visitors. Prominent men in the community, doctors, lawyers, ministers, or other educated persons were chosen for these positions, and the actual direction of the school was

given to them. They were intrusted with selecting and licensing schoolmasters, deciding what should be taught (restricted sometimes by religious belief), supervising the instruction, and, in some cases, with the preparation of catechisms of Christian faith and belief for use in the schools. Leadership in practically every phase of educational progress was provided by New England where instruction was closely associated with morality and religion.

Compulsory education in Massachusetts.- By provisions of an order of the General Court, 1642, the selectmen, who constituted the chief civil authority in a town, were made responsible for control of the schools and were given directions for enforcing penalties involved for violations of the law as defined by the Court.

"This Court, taking into consideration the great neglect of many parents and masters in training up their children in learning and Labor and other impl(o)yments; do here-upon order and decree, that in every towne the chosen men appointed for managing the prudential affayres of the same shall henceforth stand charged with the care and redresse of this evill... And they shall have power, with consent of any Court..... to put forth (as) apprentices the children of such as they shall(find) not to be able and fitt to imploy and bring them up." 3

Evidence, that such responsibilities became a matter of concern to the selectmen, is found in the pre-revolutionary writings of John Adams. In a record of his many public activities written nine years before the first guns barked at Lexington and Concord he complained that

"The schools are one great object of my attention. It is a thing of some difficulty to find out the best, most beneficial method of expending the school money..... and whether a standing grammar school is preferable to a number of school mistresses part of the year, and a grammar school part." 4

Seemingly school directors then were confronted with just such problems as those faced by school boards to-day. John Adams confessed that he was having difficulty in deciding between an admittedly poor grammar school, or resorting to "worlds we know not of", schools directed and administered by school-mistresses. Bucholz in his caustic chapter on "Public Education Feminized" seems convinced that the successors of Adams at least, have taken the latter course. As the duties of the selectmen continued to increase, the need for a body having more time to devote entirely to education became apparent.

The Dorchester school code.- The idea of a controlling group of lay members for school direction as opposed to an ex-officio body developed early even though vestiges of the latter system still prevail in many educational set-ups throughout the nation. Three years after a system of compulsory education was instituted in Massachusetts, the town of Dorchester, 1645, drafted a school code establishing what may be termed a lay board of education. After setting up an outline for school control, however, the ordinance included specific instructions for the administration and supervision of the school. The provisions follow in part:

4

A.B.Hart, American History told by Contemporaries (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1897), Vol. 2, p. 223.

5

H.E.Bucholz, Fads and Fallacies in Present-Day Education (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1931), Ch.VII.



"Upon a generall and lawfull warning of all the Inhabitants the 14th of the 1st moneth 1645 these rules and orders following presented to the Towne Concerning the Schoole of Dorchester are Confirmed by the major parte of the Inhabitants then present.

"It is orderd that:

"Three able, and sufficient men of the Plantation shalbe Chosen to bee wardens or overseers of the Schoole above mentioned who shall have the Charge oversight and Ordering thereof and of all things Concerning the same.. and shall Continue in their office and place for Terme of their lives.

"The sayd Wardens shall take care, and doe their utmost.. that the sayd Schoole be supplied with an able and sufficient Schoolemaster who nevertheless is not to be admitted into the place of Schoolemaster without the Generall consent of the Inhabitants or the major parte of them..

"The sayd Wardens shall take care that the Schoolemaster for the tyme being doe faythfully performe his dutye in his place, as a schoolemaster ought to do..

"The sayd Wardens shall from tyme to tyme see that the Schoole howse bee kept in good, and sufficient repayre..

"It is ordered, and agreed, in Generall, that where particular rules are wanting there It shalbe a parte of the office and dutye of the Wardens to order and dispose of all things that Concerne the Schoole." 6

These extracts are sufficient to show that the Dorchester code was hardly a model for modern legislators to follow, yet it was a step in the right direction. By 1647 a meager beginning toward a state system of public education was provided for the towns of the Massachusetts Colonies"Att a Session of the Generall Court." 7

"It is therefore ordered.. that every towneship in this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of

6

W.M. West, op.cit., pp. 230-233

7

Ibid., p. 235

50 householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their towne to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and reade, whose wages shall be paid either by parents,... or by the inhabitants in generall."

The beginning of school committees.- Following the enactment of the Massachusetts law in 1647, the obligations of the selectmen increased to such an extent that committees were chosen to relieve them from their school duties. The selection and certification of schoolmasters were among the first of the duties performed by such committees. The tenure of the committee members was indefinite; sometimes a group would be appointed for a particular task, the completion of which terminated the period of service. On other occasions the committees were established for a given length of time. In 1826 Massachusetts ordered the towns of the state to elect a school committee apart from the municipal officers to exercise<sup>8</sup> the general charge and superintendence of all the public schools.<sup>9</sup> The bodies elected in accordance with the new law assumed the functions of school control that are now the charge of boards of education and superintendents of schools. The people were no longer directly responsible for any phase of the educational program so far as the administration and control were concerned. The right to vote in the election of school officers was retained, but all other control over education had passed into the hands of delegated representatives, the duties of whom increase<sup>1</sup> steadily as the public schools developed programs comparable to the needs of a great nation.

<sup>8</sup> E.P.Cubberley, Public School Administration (New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916), Foot note, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> Op.cit., p. 75.

The modern school board.- The passing of teacher certification, supervision of instruction, and teacher employment from the people to the hands of committees, established primarily for such purposes, paved the way for the organization of corporate bodies legally empowered to direct the schools and provide for their maintenance. By the close of the first half of the nineteenth century the schools were very generally under control of such bodies, which were then known as boards of education. Various types of organization were set up by the different cities throughout the country. Some established district or ward systems, which resulted in steadily increasing membership on the board with attendant decentralization of authority and rise of sectional interests. A second type placed the different phases of administration into the hands of standing committees. The number of such committees in a few cases exceeded fifty in number. A third, and by far the more desirable type of school board, is that representing a district at large. Its members are elected by the people and serve for a period of four to six years without compensation. Such a board contains a limited number of members, preferably five or seven. The relations of boards of education of this type to the people whom they serve will be given more detailed consideration in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER III

## SCHOOL BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

The development of modern school boards is treated briefly in the preceding chapter; the implication of their responsibilities is attempted in the ensuing discussion. The members of all boards of education hold a position of supreme importance in promoting and fostering the general welfare of those whom they serve. The relations of the board of education to the community, to the school, and to the state program of education are considered here.

## Relation to the Community It Serves

The board a representative body.- The members of some school boards are elected directly by the people, others are appointed by constitutional officers, and still others serve in an ex-officio capacity. In any case, they are the chosen and legal representatives of the people in the community which they serve. It is foolish to assume that any group of men and women constituting a board of education should ever be permitted to consider the schools a particular province of theirs to control and administer as they may wish. The development of the modern school board, as we have noted before, had its beginnings when the people became convinced they were no longer able to assume the active control of the numerous educational activities about them. The duties relinquished by the people were subsequently delegated to committees or groups, who became the actual educational directors. The recognized obligation of such boards of education is the support and encouragement of all educational interests along lines favorable to the

the majority of the people. It becomes the duty of the board to ascertain the needs of the community in matters pertaining to education and provide for such while remembering always, that the wishes of the people must be respected.

Importance of the position.- The type of educational advantages offered by any community will, throughout a long period of time, be a fairly accurate reflection of the insight and forethought of its boards of education. A school board, whose members are chosen because of their familiarity with educational problems and because of a genuine interest in civic affairs, should almost invariably foster programs that are best suited to the needs of the people whom they serve. The reverse may be expected when they are made members because of their financial or political influence in the community. A board of the former type may be expected to prevent the adoption of extreme and questionable policies advocated by either over-zealous administrators or by contending factions which are usually prevalent in every community. On the other hand, since the board of education is the deciding element in all matters of school control, its members can frustrate the very best administrative effort and advice by arbitrarily refusing to support a sensible and well-planned policy. The schools and their work come closer possibly to the average citizen than any other governmental function, a condition therefore, which makes the selection of board members a consideration of general interest.

Educational leadership of the board.- The extent to which a board of education is able to enlist the active support and cooperation of all the people is an index to its effectiveness in promoting a school system worthy of the respect and admiration of

the entire citizenship. A danger to be avoided, however, is securing the approval of the people by doing nothing to stimulate neither a commending interest on the part of those favorable to education nor a spirited protest by those opposed. Certain elements, and frequently the most influential, in every community are content with the administration of the schools so long as the tax rate is fixed at a low level, and nothing apparently expensive is introduced into the system. But a board of education should always have a program, planned at least, in advance of the views of even the most progressive citizens, and the contentions of the obstructing elements should be disregarded so long as they are inconsistent with the best educational interests of all concerned. A thinking and progressive board should be cognizant of the nature of complaints against certain parts of the school program before the objections are raised, and should have means and arguments devised for meeting the same. In view of these considerations it is apparent that the membership of the board of education should be made up of the most forward-looking and substantial element in the community. But without the sensible and continued support of the people, those who direct the educational affairs are seriously handicapped.

It is essential that boards of education secure the intelligent support of the community in order that they may negate the influences of those seeking to use the schools for "spoils purposes". A satisfactory school system does not necessarily follow the selection of a high-type board members unless they are able to reconcile factional differences that are responsible for petty and unwarranted attacks against the control and direction

of the schools. When a school board finds its administrative agencies beset with greed and nepotism, firm measures must be employed at the risk of creating powerful opposition.

In the face of resentful criticisms on the part of selfish interests a good board of education will refuse to be intimidated or influenced by those having "axes to grind" or by those disgruntled because of personal disappointment. If disagreement between the board and citizens of the community exists, major issues that can be delayed temporarily, should not be decided until the wishes of the people are ascertained. In the meantime it becomes the duty of the board to present the facts in the case to the public. Such procedure involves the likelihood of political interference, but public sentiment usually asserts itself in the direction of common-sense and justice. Realizing that the development and maintenance of a satisfactory school system is impossible without the loyalty of the people and without whole-hearted cooperation among members of the board and their administrative officers, it is imperative that boards of education studiously encourage both.

#### Relation to the School It Serves

The public schools of America are established for the children and must be maintained for them. It is altogether too easy for the adult citizenship of a community to view the school in the light of their own particular interests at the time. Frequently criticisms are made that the products of the public schools are unable to do much; the inference is, of course, that they cannot perform the duties of adult life. It is the duty of the board of education and those directly responsible to it to prevent any

encroachment on the opportunities of children to enjoy educational advantages that are rightfully theirs. In this obligation the board of education is staunchly supported by the broad powers given it by laws of the various states.

Legal authority of boards of education.- Laws of the different states give the many boards of education practically complete control over the public schools. Definite authority is vested in the various types of boards- the college or university board, the state board, the county board, and the city or district board. Among the many powers intrusted to such boards are the following: to select administrators, supervisors, and teachers, to determine salary schedules, to adopt textbooks, to make courses of study, to purchase supplies and equipment, to levy taxes, to submit bond issues, to provide buildings and grounds, to certify teachers, to arrange for transportation of pupils, and to perform great numbers of other detail activities connected with the operation of schools. Experience has shown that it is virtually impossible for boards of education satisfactorily to perform all these duties. Their members usually have neither the time nor the special type of training that is essential for the proper discharge of the duties involved in administering the many activities of public education. The accepted practice has become, therefore, the employment of carefully trained executive officers to whom the greater part of the work is delegated.

The work of the superintendent of schools.- The office of superintendent of schools is a comparatively recent development. Authorities differ slightly as to which state first created the



office. New York made provision for a state superintendent in 1812, and Providence Rhode Island established a city superintendency in 1836.<sup>1</sup> Louisville, Kentucky and Buffalo, New York had city superintendents by 1837.<sup>2</sup> In the century following the trend throughout the United States has ~~universally~~ been toward the establishment of superintendencies and the fixation of executive function in them with the board of education performing the legislative and judicial functions connected with the school program.

There are a number of definite obligations and duties that still remain with the board and should always be its special province. The following list contains the more important:\*

- "Select the chief executive officer and support him in the discharge of his duties.
- Require and discuss report of the chief executive concerning the progress of the schools, in terms of achievement of pupils, teachers, and supervisors.
- Pass upon the annual budget for maintenance prepared by the chief executive and his assistants.
- Advise with the chief executive, affording a group judgment, on his recommendations for extensions and readjustments of the scope of educational activities.
- Debate and pass upon recommendations of the chief executive for additional capital outlays-for buildings, sites, improvements- and determine the means of financing same: e.g., bonds, loans.
- Determine, after consultation with the chief executive, the salary schedules.
- Appoint, upon the recommendation and nomination of the chief executive, teachers, principals, and supervisors.
- Approve textbooks selected by the chief executive and approve courses of study recommended by him.

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<sup>1</sup> Ward G.Reeder, The Fundamentals of Public School Administration (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1934), p.8.

<sup>2</sup> Engelhardt, Fred, Public School Organization and Administration (Chicago, Ginn & Co., 1931), p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> ~~Excerpt from~~ F.W.Theisen, The City Superintendent and the Board of Education, Teachers College Publications, Columbia University, New York, 1917), pp. 30-31.

"Pass upon architects' plans, approved by the chief executive and his assistants, for buildings that have been approved. Act as a court of final appeal for teachers, supervisors, and patrons in cases, which the superintendent has not been able to dispose of or, which have been appealed from his decision.

Adopt, upon consultation with the chief executive, a set of rules and regulations for the government of the school system."

Represent the needs of the schools to the proper civil authorities or before the legislature.

Approve the list of bills for expenditures previously authorized and approved by the executive officers.

Consider the recommendations of the executive officers on legal matters, and decide upon the steps to be taken.

Hear communications, written or oral, from individuals or organizations concerning matters of administration or policy.

Serve as laymen, even after retiring from the board, to champion school needs and further public support of education as others champion good streets, parks, etc.

Require and consider reports of the business transacted or pending and of the financial status of the system.

Represent the needs of the schools before the public, in the press, on the platform, etc.."

A careful analysis of this list discloses the fact that the author recommended that all policies concerning the schools should be initiated by the superintendent and accepted or rejected finally by the board of education. After a policy has been definitely established by the board, it becomes the duty of the chief executive to carry out the administrative details involved. Such a procedure at once relieves the board of an almost innumerable list of difficult and highly specialized duties and places responsibility for results on the shoulders of the superintendent. In case unsatisfactory results ensue, the course to be followed is simple; either the superintendent is required to remedy conditions, or he is requested to resign. On the other hand, when all the administrative functions of a school system are assumed by the board of education, responsibility for failures is determined with difficulty.

Since authority for certain activities is not definitely established, shirking responsibility for failure is a natural consequence. Very likely the best advice that may be given any board of education is the first item in Theisen's list; "Select a chief executive and support him in the discharge of his duties." Then he and the board will be in a position to organize and maintain a school system complying with the best practices and with the standards established by the state department of education.

#### Relation to the State Program of Education

No provision was made for education by the framers of the Constitution, but it became the obligation of the different states through the wording of the tenth amendment: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."<sup>4</sup> Article III of the Ordinance of 1787, however, included education among the things to be fostered and encouraged within the territory: "Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."<sup>5</sup> Following the precedent of the makers of the Constitution and the advice of men like Jefferson, the states have assumed quite largely the responsibility for the direction and means of supporting public education.

Dependence of schools on state support.- A comparatively small

<sup>4</sup> William MacDonald, Documentary Source Book of American History (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 251

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

percentage of financial support for public schools is derived from state sources considering the United States as a whole, but in the less fortunate areas the schools are dependent almost entirely on funds received from the state. Under such conditions it is necessary for local boards of education, whether they be county-wide or restricted to a district in their authority, to cooperate with the state authorities in every way possible in order to effect the most feasible means of expending the limited revenue so derived. Even in the more prosperous local areas school directors are obligated to the state system for legal and constitutional authority have been vested in state officers and organizations. The various and differing types of school organization in existence throughout the many states have been established under provisions of state law and operate under restrictions and regulations of the same. A perfect understanding and accord among the members of local boards of education, their executive and administrative officers, and the personnel of the state department of education is essential to the development of effective school programs.

Compliance with state laws and regulations of the state department of education.- Administrative blunders and failures in school policies invariably follow any procedure that does not conform with legal provisions and the requirements of the state department of education. The wise administrator will check his recommendations against statutory provisions and state regulations before presenting them to his board for approval. When this is done, it remains only for the board to determine whether or not the recommendations are in line with the best local interests and in

sympathy with the views of a majority of its members. Among the many regulations usually determined by state departments of education are: definite budgetary procedure, the forms of financial and general reports, teacher training and certification, salary schedule principles, specifications for buildings and grounds, types of and amount of equipment and supplies for libraries, laboratories, and gymnasiums, courses of study, basal textbooks, classification of schools, and many other varying requirements that correspond to the laws of the various states.

Familiarity with the set-up and program of the state department of education enables the local board to consider its policies in the broader light of recommended conditions and general practices. No intelligent board chooses to establish and attempt to maintain a system of schools that is hopelessly out of line with the best theory and practice. The advice and guidance of the state department is always available, and for the most part will be in keeping with the best interests of the schools throughout the state. If under any circumstances the state department seeks arbitrarily to enforce regulations that are quite definitely disadvantageous and discriminating, members of local boards should vigorously oppose such and seek to effect an arrangement fair to all concerned. As a rule, however, it will be advisable for the members of local boards of education to support loyally the program and leadership of the state department.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE SCHOOL BOARD AT WORK

The discussion in the preceding chapters is devoted to the history, development, and the responsibilities of boards of education. The purpose of this chapter is to present an outline of procedure whereby boards of education may comply in a satisfactory manner with their obligations involved in the transaction of official business. Since the extent of business activities vary with the size of the district represented, it is impossible to include all the items of business transacted by the many boards of education throughout the country. The conduct of only those general phases of business, that are common to all types of boards, will be considered.

## The Organization Meeting

Each board of education is required by statutes of its state to hold an annual meeting for the purpose of organization. Such meetings are held usually during the first week of the year, and the organization perfected continues for one year unless vacancies occur by death, resignation, or removal during the year.

Induction into office.-New members, if any, are qualified according to law at the organization meeting. Certificates of election or official notices of appointment should be presented, duly received, and filed. The minutes of the meeting should contain the record of all members including: name and address, date of election or appointment, date of qualification, and date of expiration of service. If members are appointed during the year to fill vacancies,

this data should be included in the minutes of the meeting, at which they are qualified, and a notation of such filed with the minutes of the organization meeting.

The election of officers.-After the meeting is called to order, a temporary chairman and a temporary secretary should be chosen until the permanent organization is perfected. When this has been done, the temporary chairman should proceed with the election of the regular officers. They usually include a president or chairman, a vice-president or vice-chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer. Unless the salaries of the secretary and treasurer have been fixed by the previous board, they should be determined before the election of those officers.

Adoption of rules of order.- In order to prevent disputes and misunderstandings as to practices of parliamentary procedure, a standard work of parliamentary law should be adopted at the organization meeting. Either Cushing's "Manual" or Robert's "Rules of Order" is satisfactory.

Rules and regulations.- In the event the retiring board had a set of rules and regulations in effect, they should be considered for adoption, amendment, or rejection. When none are left, the chairman should appoint a committee to consult with the superintendent of schools in the preparation of a set of rules and regulations that are adapted to the needs of the particular system. Instructions to such a committee might well include Morrison's advice on rules and regulations: "They should be formulated from

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1  
J. Cayce Morrison, The Value of Carefully Defined Rules and Regulations Covering the Work of the School Board And the Superintendent, The American School Board Journal (Milwaukee, Bruce Publishing Co.), Vol. 72, pp. 48-49



an analysis of the service rendered, should eliminate overlapping of authority, and should constantly be subject to revision."

TABLE IV  
MINUTES OF THE ORGANIZATION MEETING

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OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS  
Of the  
ANNUAL ORGANIZATION MEETING  
of  
THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Ironville, Ky.  
January 6, 1936.

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The Board of Education of the Independent District of Ironville, of the County of Mortar, State of Kentucky, met in Regular Annual Organization Session at 8:00 P.M., on Monday, January 6, 1936, in the office of the Superintendent of Schools, 1492 State Street.

Members present were: Messrs. Stone, Sandes, Gravell, Steele, Roche.

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Temporary Organization

1. Credentials of election presented by Messrs. Roche, Steele, Gravell.
2. Mr. Stone was elected Temporary Chairman on motion of Mr. Roche.
3. Mr. Sandes was elected Temporary Secretary on motion of Mr. Gravell.

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Permanent Organization

1. On motion of Mr. Gravell, seconded by Mr. Steele, Mr. Stone was unanimously elected President, there being no other nominations.
2. On motion of Mr. Steele, seconded by Mr. Roche, Mr. Gravell was unanimously elected Vice-President, there being no other nominations.



3. On motion of Mr. Roche, seconded by Mr. Sandes, the salary of the Secretary-treasurer was fixed at \$1200.00 for the year.  
Yeas: Messrs. Stone, Sandes, Gravel, Steele, Roche.  
Nays: None.
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4. After nomination by Mr. Gravel, seconded by Mr. Sandes, Mr. J.C. Builder was elected Secretary-treasurer for one year at the salary fixed.  
Yeas: Messrs. Stone, Sandes, Gravel, Steele, Roche.  
Nays: None.
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5. On motion of Mr. Steele, seconded by Mr. Roche, Robert's "Rules of Order" were unanimously adopted for use in all parliamentary proceedings of the Board.
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6. On motion of Mr. Gravel, seconded by Mr. Roche, it was ordered that a Committee of three members be appointed by the President to confer with the Superintendent of Schools in the preparation of a set of Rules and Regulations governing all proceedings of the Board.
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7. On motion of Mr. Steele, seconded by Mr. Gravel, it was ordered that a Record of all Board Members be included in the minutes of this meeting.

## RECORD OF MEMBERS

Member	Address	Date Elect- ed or Appointed	Date Quali- fied	Date Expira- tion of Service
I.M. Stone	:1906 Elme St.	:Dec. 9, 1934.	:Jan. 8, 1935.	:Dec. 31, '38.
U.R. Sandes	:1234 Vine St.	:Dec. 9, 1934.	:Jan. 8, 1935.	:Dec. 31, '38.
L.R. Gravel	:786 Park St.	:Nov. 5, 1935.	:Jan. 6, 1936.	:Dec. 31, '39.
C.E. Steele	:5328 State St.	:Nov. 5, 1935.	:Jan. 6, 1936.	:Dec. 31, '39.
66	:	:	:	:
R.C. Roche	:1916 Vine St.	:Nov. 5, 1935.	:Jan. 6, 1936.	:Dec. 31, '39.

8. Motion to adjourn by Mr. Roche, seconded by Mr. Steele prevailed.

I.M. Stone, Temporary Chairman.  
U.R. Sandes, Temporary Secretary.

## Rules and Regulations

Principles.--The rules and regulations governing the official actions of a board of education should form a basis of common understanding, on which the many activities of the schools may be directed without the confusion and overlapping of authority, that results from vaguely defined obligations and duties. The following basic principles are suggested by Engelhardt:

- "Rules should be formulated in language clearly understandable.
- Rules should define clearly the duties and responsibilities of individuals and groups of individuals within the system.
- Rules should be consistent with law.
- Rules should in reality be guiding principles rather than administrative procedure.
- Rules should not restrict or kill initiative.
- Rules should encourage individuals to feel free to act within certain limits.
- Rules and regulations should be workable and should be framed by the executive and his associated staff and should be approved by the directing board." 2

The recently enacted Kentucky School Code sets forth a bit more definitely the purposes of rules and regulations to be adopted by all boards of education within that state. The law provided that each board whether it be county or district should within sixty days after the law became effective

"Meet and adopt a body of rules, regulations and by-laws for its meetings and proceedings; for the government, regulation, and management of the schools and school property; and for the qualification and employment of teachers and management of pupils. Such rules, regulations and by-laws may be changed, altered, or set aside upon the affirmative vote of three (majority) members of the board of education." 3

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2

Fred Engelhardt, Public School Organization and Administration (Chicago, Ginn and Co., 1931), pp. 95-96

3

Kentucky School Code, 1934, Article V, Section 28

Proposed rules and regulations.-The following set of rules and regulations, general in their application, may be altered to meet the needs of any school system. All duties and powers listed are subject, of course, to state law.

#### I. Duties of the Board of Education

A. General duties.- The board of education, representing the people of the district, shall be the legislative and judicial body which settles finally all matters of general school policy and acts as a court of final appeal in disputes arising out of administrative duties. "In determining school policy it shall (1) hear and consider facts and recommendations; (2) adopt a plan, policy, or course of action; and (3) authorize the proper person or persons to carry out the legislation." 4

B. Specific duties.- The list included is only partial and should include other duties incidental to the conduct of the business connected with any school system.

1. Elect a superintendent, when there is a vacancy, and delegate to him the powers hereinafter provided.
2. To establish, maintain, or abolish such schools, departments, or positions deemed necessary in the best interests of the system.
3. To determine the tax levy of the district.
4. To consider and approve the annual budget.
5. To authorize (after approval of the proper administrative officers) all expenditures provided for in the budget.
6. To fix salaries and enter into contracts with all employees of the board.

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4

Model By-Laws Adopted by the New Ulm (Minnesota) School Board, American School Board Journal, Milwaukee, Bruce Pub. Co., Vol. 67 (November, 1933), p. 31.

7. To approve courses of study for the different schools.
8. To submit bond issues and provide for the retirement of the bonds.
9. To borrow money on short term obligations.
10. To authorize the preparation and publication of reports to the community concerning the activities and needs of the schools.
11. To require officers of the various departments to make reports regarding the activities directed by them.
12. To make contracts for the purchase of building sites, the erection or improvement of buildings, and the installation of new equipment.

## II Duties of the Superintendent of Schools

A. General duties.- The superintendent, as the chief executive officer of the school system, is charged with initiating policies and with administering the activities provided for in the policies approved by the board.

B. Specific duties.- This list is only partial, and is meant to include any and all other details of administration incidental to the purely executive duties of the superintendent.

1. To attend all meetings of the board except executive sessions when his tenure and salary are being considered.
2. To prepare a detailed annual budget showing both the proposed expenditures and sources of revenues.
3. To receive tuition and all other moneys separate and apart from the regular sources of income and make reports of such receipts to the board.
4. To prepare and recommend salary schedules for all employees of the board.
5. To nominate and recommend candidates for positions within the system.
6. To assign principals, teachers, supervisors, janitors, and other employees to the different positions and buildings.
7. To prepare courses of study.
8. To approve all plans and schemes for supervision of instruction.

9. To recommend the type and amount of supplies and equipment needed for the system.
10. To have supervision and direction over supervisors, principals, janitors, and all others employed in the conduct of the schools.
11. To have direction in classifying, promoting, and graduating pupils.
12. To make temporary appointments in case of vacancies in the administrative or teaching force.
13. To recommend the selection of sites for new buildings and grounds.
14. To suspend, subject to the approval of the board, any employee for misconduct in the discharge of his duties.
15. To recommend alterations and improvements or other capital outlays.
16. To administer all internal accounts.
17. To administer extra-curricular activities.
18. To delegate authority to others but to be held accountable for the execution of all powers so delegated.
19. To supervise all matters of repair and improvement authorized by the board.
20. To audit all claims, approve all bills, and submit the same to the board for its approval.

### III Organization of the Board

A. Election of officers.-The board, shall on the first Monday in January of each year, hold an organization meeting and elect a chairman, vice-chairman from their own members, and a secretary-treasurer, who is not a member. The salary of the secretary-treasurer shall be fixed at this meeting. All officers shall serve until their successors are duly elected and qualified.

B. Quorum.-A majority of the total membership of the board shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

C. Committees.-No standing committees shall be appointed, the entire membership serving as a committee of the whole, except when

special committees are appointed for definite purposes. When the report of such committee has been received and disposed of by the board, the committee shall be discharged.

D. Record of votes.-The names of those voting in favor of a motion and the names of those opposed will be recorded in the minutes on request of any member.

E. Rules of parliamentary procedure.-Except as herein otherwise provided, Cushing's "Manual" will be followed in the parliamentary proceedings of the board.

#### IV Duties of Board Officers

A. Chairman.-The chairman of the board shall preside at all meetings, and shall countersign all orders of the treasurer and all official obligations incurred in behalf of the district.

B. Vice-chairmen.- In the absence of the chairman, the vice-chairman shall act in his stead.

C. Secretary-treasurer.-(1) The secretary-treasurer shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings of all meetings of the board.(2) He shall keep an accurate record of all receipts and disbursements of the district as required by law and the department of education for the state.(3) He shall receive the moneys from all regular sources of revenue and deposit same in the depositories designated by the board.(4) He shall make disbursements when ordered by the board and the order countersigned by the chairman. (6) He shall give bond for the faithful performance of his duties, with such sureties and in such amount as may be required by law or by order of the board. The cost of such bond shall be approved and paid by the board.

V. Meetings of the board.-All meetings of the board shall be

held at the office of the superintendent of schools. Regular meetings shall be held on the fourth Monday of each month at 8:00P.M., except the annual organization meeting which shall be held as herein provided. Special or called meetings may be called by the chairman or by request of a majority of the members of the board at any time provided legal notice of twenty-four hours is given each member. When a majority of the members agree that an emergency exists, a special or called meeting may be held at the most convenient time and place without the formality of legal notice.

Procedure of meetings.- The regular order of business shall be as follows. (It may be changed by vote of the majority of members.)

1. Call to order and roll call.
2. Reading and approving the minutes of the previous session.
3. Consideration of recommendations from the public.
4. Report of special committees.
5. Report of the secretary-treasurer.
6. Report of the superintendent.
7. Unfinished business.
8. New business
9. Adjournment

#### Making the Board Meeting effective

The meeting of a board of education should be conducted in much the same fashion as a meeting of the board of directors of a corporation. The meeting should begin promptly, the business to be transacted should be presented clearly and concisely by those

responsible for the reports, and deliberations confined strictly to the matters under consideration. The policies of a school board and the conduct of the business transacted by them are very likely to correspond with the manner in which the board meetings are conducted.

Agenda for board meetings.-When a regular order of business is established by the board in the rules and regulations governing its actions, the nature of matters to be considered will always be fairly well established. However, when meetings are called for special purposes, the business at hand should be promptly and clearly presented. A sufficient number of copies of all reports and recommendations should be provided to supply each member with one. With the data and recommendations before them, the members are able to proceed with their deliberations without loss of time while the various items are explained.

Time required for board meetings.-It is impossible to allot arbitrarily definite periods of time in which certain phases of school board business shall be transacted. As a guide, however, Almack's table and that of the Research Bulletin of the N.E.A. are helpful. The average length of time spent by school boards in their meetings approximates fifty hours per year. If two hours time is allowed for each meeting and if eighteen meetings are necessary during the year, there still remains fourteen hours during which other board activities may be directed.

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\* See Table I and footnote following; , P. 3.

<sup>5</sup> George S. Counts, The Social Composition of Boards of Education (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1927), p. 28.



Executive sessions of the board.-As a general rule it is considered advisable to have all board meetings open to the public when matters of a general nature are being considered. Sessions, at which the public should be excluded, are recommended when matters concerning qualifications, morals, and other strictly personal subjects are being considered. As has been previously stated the superintendent should not be present when his tenure and salary are being discussed and determined. As quickly as the executive session is adjourned, the public should be permitted to attend the further deliberations of the body.

The minutes of the board meeting.- The official record of the proceedings of the board meeting should be carefully recorded by the officer on whom such obligation is placed. The minutes should be sufficiently complete that there can be no possibility of any misinterpretation in their meaning when it becomes necessary to refer to the official record. On the other hand, the record should be simply and clearly stated and carefully indexed for convenience of those who may wish to consult its provisions. In order to insure both accuracy and neatness in form, the clerk or secretary should take notes at the meeting and record them in permanent form when his time is not so limited.

The opening paragraph of the minutes of any meeting according to Grill should include the following information:

1. The legal name of the organization and the place of meeting.
2. The date of the meeting and the hour.
3. The kind of meeting, whether regular, also called stated, special, or adjourned.
4. The name and title of the officer who calls the meeting to order.

5. The names of the members present.
6. The names of the absentees." 6

General headings indicating the type of action taken should be made in prominent type(preferably in capitals), and individual items should be numbered consecutively beginning with the first meeting of the year. A code letter(t for teacher, j for janitor, etc.) following the number of the item is helpful in making a rapid survey of the minutes for certain types of actions of the board. Special care should be taken to avoid a complicated form either in numbering or indexing the minutes.

#### Summary

All meetings of the board of education should be conducted on a strictly business-like basis and procedures should be determined beforehand so far as practicable. A definitely stated set of rules and regulations should be adopted as a basis on which all duties of the board are performed and all relations with the administrative officers are determined. The duties of the board should be carefully and clearly differentiated from those of its chief executive officer in the rules and regulations. A complete docket or agenda should be prepared and presented to each member before or at the beginning of each meeting. The minutes or official record of all meetings of the board should be sufficiently complete and accurate to insure against any misunderstanding concerning their meaning and import. For convenience in future reference the record should be simply indexed and the items of business numbered.

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<sup>6</sup> George W. Grill, The Minutes of the Board of Education(Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Co., 1932), p. 21.

## CHAPTER V

## THE IDEAL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

The discussions of chapters III and IV are confined, in the main, to the responsibilities of the board as a body and to the conduct of official business requiring the collective action of at least a majority of the membership. The purpose of this chapter is to indicate the implications of personal responsibility as applied to the individual member on a board of education. The fundamental contention is that the board will not progress in the development of policies very far above the level at which the poorest member takes his stand. The influence of the backward or extremely conservative member will assert itself quite as surely as that of the most progressive. If it is assumed that these statements represent the facts in the case, or even partly so, then the individual members of every board of education should pledge themselves to become satisfactory representatives of the people in the district they serve. The proper control of a public school system requires unanimity of purpose and action; these cannot exist unless the members of the directing body are sufficiently trained to cooperate with each other in the performance of their duties. Qualifications for successful membership on a board of education are such that any well-meaning and progressive citizen should be able to render valuable service, when chosen to that body if he is willing to study the educational needs of his community and stand by his convictions concerning what should be done.

Educational qualifications.—There are no definite criteria on which to determine educational requirements for school board

members, but it seems safe to say that a secondary education or its equivalent should be a reasonable basis for consideration. Any mature individual of average intelligence, having the inclination to study the best theory and practice in matters of school control, should with some experience make a satisfactory board member, even though his education was limited to the high school level. When there are available, however, those who have had the advantages of more advanced educational opportunities, they should be given preference. The very best trained persons in the community should be enlisted for board service whenever possible.

In a current issue of the American School Board Journal the argument is made that school board members should be educators,<sup>1</sup> the reasons being that they should seek to avoid being "classified as a hindrance to education", and that their duties in selecting the superintendent and employing teachers required that they be familiar with the educational details involved. There is an element of truth in such contentions, but it is also possible for board members to be educators without being highly educated. They may well be compared to the chauffeur, who knows nothing of the intricate mechanism of his car, but who is able to drive expertly. After all possibly the most important educational qualification for board members is a progressive attitude toward the program of public education. A man or woman having an elementary education is to be preferred over a Ph.D., whose interests are

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Harry S. Ganders, "Should School Board Members be Educators?" American School Board Journal, Vol. 17, No. 4 (April 1936)

self-centered in his particular field, while those of the former are progressive toward the program of education.

Moral qualifications.-The mere statement, that members of boards of education should have and maintain a high moral standard, should be sufficient in this connection. But attention is called to three pertinent considerations. In the first place, members of school boards are responsible for and should assume a position of leadership in educational matters. Theirs should be the example of moral and civic uprightness for all employees of the system. Secondly, it would be inconsistent for them to reprimand or dismiss teachers and others employed by them on charges of misconduct unless the individual members of the board are innocent of all similar charges. A third and important consideration is the fact that moral stability on the part of the board of education inspires confidence and insures the respect and admiration of even those who otherwise are inclined to criticise the work of the public schools.

Leadership within the community.- Frequently, those sought for school board membership, complain that they are too busy to serve. The fact that they are busy, makes them all the more eligible, their services the more valuable. Members of boards of education and prospective members should not confuse political power and financial prestige with actual leadership in the community. Sometimes the most selfish and conservative elements enjoy political or financial security, while the real leaders of the community are recruited from the ranks of the reasonably successful business and professional men. The school board member should exert every means

and effort to meet his responsibilities as an educational leader regardless of his economic or political status.

When an individual is elected to membership on the board of education, he should employ the same business acumen and far-sighted, progressive attitude in his work for the schools that characterize his efforts in behalf of his own business or profession. The public school system is the most important business in America to-day and should be so regarded by those responsible for its direction.

#### Complying With Ethical Principles

In the activities of the board of education, as in those of all other business organizations, care must be taken to prevent the establishment of practices that are generally regarded as contrary to ethical standards. The discredited notion that school boards manage the schools was largely responsible for the development of many customs that are clearly unethical. The following code of ethics constitutes a brief and simple set of principles for the guidance of school board members in their various relations with each other and with the public.

1. Judgment of the body always takes precedence over that of any one member.
2. Promises made outside of board meetings are unofficial and show poor judgment.
3. Discussions and actions of the board meeting shall be published or spread abroad only by consent of the board.
4. Good and sufficient reason should be evident before a fellow board member is openly or privately criticised.
5. Nepotism has no place in a school system.
6. ~~Nothing on personal matters should be discussed~~

6. Asking or granting favors is a sure way to start the board in the wrong direction.
7. The fear of criticism is no legitimate reason for refusal to stand by honest convictions.
8. The defense of the good name of the schools, teachers, and pupils is a primary obligation of the board.
9. Competitive bidding for positions reduces the school system to the level of horse jockeying.
10. Private correspondence and communications are meant to be kept private.
11. Cliques controlling the board are the board and should be abolished.
12. Petty criticisms and complaints against the administration or control of the schools should be discouraged.
13. Meddling with the administrative and supervisory details of the schools does not come under the heading of school control.
14. Holding administrative or supervisory officers responsible for results is a province of the board.
15. Failure to support the proposed program of the schools because of personal reasons is a dangerous precedent.

#### Philosophy of School Board Members

Whether he realizes it or not, or whether he wishes to call it by that name, every member of a board of education has a definite philosophy concerning the general principles of his work with regard to the public schools. The impressions gathered from time to time gradually fabricate themselves into a general impression and become a part of the individual. The perspective thus acquired determines to a very appreciable degree the course of action he will follow in the discharge of his official duties. A broad-minded, far-sighted board member may be expected to favor a comprehensive school system. The member, who is unable to see beyond the immediate needs of the schools, is unlikely to be willing to provide the necessary support for an adequate school system.

## General Qualifications

The following table includes a list of both desirable and undesirable traits of school board members.

TABLE V

A CHECKING LIST FOR DESIRABLE AND UNDESIRABLE TRAITS OF A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER \*

Desirable	Undesirable
Is unselfish, has a pronounced interest in children and in human welfare.	Is self-centered, interests largely limited to family or to small groups.
Is frank, straightforward	Is vacillating, indecisive
Acts in the open, does not intrigue, forms no cliques with other members to control board action.	Makes combinations and trades votes for personal ends.
Has an eye for school welfare, decides questions on merit, has no favorites, seeks no positions for friends or partisans, expects no special privileges.	Shows favoritism, nepotism, is influenced by personal reasons, believes in the spoils system.
Assumes his share of responsibility for the actions of the board.	Dodges responsibility.
In sympathy with the teachers and their work, regarding teaching a high profession.	Inclined to belittle the teaching profession.

\*Adapted from Edgar Mendenhall, The City School Board Member and His Task (Pittsburg, Kansas, The College Inn Book Store, 1929), pp. 50 ff.



Material for board membership.- Over thirty years ago Chancellor indicated the classes of American citizens from which good and poor board members might be expected to come. The following tables is a summary of his findings.

TABLE VI

CLASSES FURNISHING SATISFACTORY AND UNSATISFACTORY BOARD MEMBERS  
\*\*

Classes generally furnishing good members.	: Classes that seldom furnish good members.
Manufacturers accustomed to dealing with bodies of men and with important interests.	: Inexperienced men, whatever be their calling; men in subordinate positions.
Merchants, contractors, bankers, and other men of large affairs.	: Unsuccessful men. : Uneducated and unlearned men. : Women.
Physicians, if in successful practice.	: Politicians. : Newspaper men.
College graduates in any walk of life who are successful in their own affairs; and remember what education has done for them.	: Old men retired from business.

Seemingly, Chancellor has placed a premium on success, presumably financial success. There is no good reason why a substantial, progressive citizen, who is in a subordinate position should not make a good board member. The same is true with newspaper men and certainly some women make highly capable members.

Adapted from W.E.Chancellor, Our Schools Their Administration And Supervision(Boston, D.C.Heath & Co., 1908), pp. 12-13.

## Summary

It is difficult to describe the ideal board member or give a composite of the traits and qualifications he would have. The following table is meant to be a self-rating scale including a number of the more important considerations. Many others might be mentioned, but if a board member can conscientiously mark satisfactory after each item of the list, he should approach at least the ideal member.

TABLE VII  
SOME QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL BOARD MEMBER

Qualifications	Satisfactory	Questionable	Unsatisfactory
An education comparable to the secondary level or higher.	:	:	:
Progressive attitude toward public education.	:	:	:
High moral and ethical standards, both personal and public.	:	:	:
Mature and sound business judgment, success in personal affairs.	:	:	:
Unselfish attitude toward the school and community.	:	:	:
Courage to stand by convictions regardless of criticism.	:	:	:
Willingness to cooperate with the board, superintendent, and teachers.	:	:	:
Respect for the authority of all school employees.	:	:	:
Regard for the dignity and responsibility of the position.	:	:	:
Vision and forethought in regard to educational needs.	:	:	:
Realization that the schools exist for the children, not for the advantage of present adult citizenship.	:	:	:
Open-mindedness, willingness to consider fairly the views of others and to make readjustments when convinced.	:	:	:

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions of this study relative to school boards and school board members are that:

1. The development of boards of education resulted from a definite need for improved school direction.
2. School boards of five or seven members should be elected at large by the people and serve without pay for a term of four to six years.
3. The general assent with school policies does not always indicate a satisfactory school board.
4. The official business of the board of education should be done with the entire membership acting as a committee of the whole; standing committees tend to disintegrate.
5. Sound business principles should be followed by the board in all its deliberations and actions.
6. Rules and regulations are essential to the satisfactory direction of school board activities.
7. There is a clear-cut distinction between the duties of the board and those of the superintendent.
8. Membership on a board of education implies a position of importance and responsibility.
9. The character of the school system maintained by a community reflects the type of leadership on its board of education.
10. Financial or political prominence does not necessarily qualify an individual for school board membership.

11. A progressive attitude and a broad educational perspective are essential to satisfactory membership on a board of education.
12. Regard for ethical and moral principles are primary qualifications for school board members.

The recommendations of this study are that:

1. The performance of all duties involving matters of school policy be retained by the board.
2. The superintendent be given broad powers and be held accountable for results.
3. Policies, concerning the best interests of the community in matters of education, be adopted and an effort made to enlist the support and cooperation of the people in their application.
4. A set of defensible rules and regulations be adopted by the board for its guidance in all deliberations and actions.
5. Business and ethical principles be observed in all activities of the board.
6. The prerogatives of the board in establishing adequate support for schools be exercised regardless of criticism.
7. Members seek to establish unity among themselves and discourage factional differences in the community.
8. Sound budgetary principles and practices be adopted.
9. Reports from the administrative officers be required at regular intervals or at such times as deemed necessary.
10. Cooperation and support be given the chief executive officer in the discharge of his duties.
11. The board comply with all legal requirements and with the regulations of the state department of education.

regulations of the state department of education.

12. Board members refuse to commit themselves on matters pertaining to official school business outside of board meetings.
13. Board members be selected from those who have enjoyed reasonable success in their own private affairs.
14. Board members maintain an unselfish and progressive attitude toward the school and the community.
15. That public education be considered, by boards of education and their individual members, the most important business of the nation to-day.

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